

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER  
6900 GEORGIA AVENUE, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20307-5001

WRAMC Regulation  
No. 40-93

1 JUL 2002

Medical Services  
**WITHDRAWAL OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL FROM PATIENT CARE  
FOR ETHICAL OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

**1. History**

This policy is a revision of the previous policy. Changes have not been highlighted.

**2. Purpose**

a. This directive establishes procedures which Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) personnel involved in the patient's care must follow to request withdrawal from participating in a patient's care where the prescribed care conflicts with the health care provider's firmly held ethical or religious beliefs. The patient's disability, diagnosis, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or age shall not constitute grounds for refusal to treat. Licensed health care professionals should check with their state licensing boards for possible stricter prohibitions on refusal to treat.

b. This regulation does not apply to health care decisions made by treating physicians concerning medical necessity or futility of treatment. Situations involving these issues may be referred to the Hospital Ethics Committee.

**3. Applicability**

This policy is applicable to all WRAMC personnel who provide health care in any setting.

**4. References**

- a. AR 40-3, Medical, Dental and Veterinary Care, 28 Jan 2002.
- b. AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, 13 May 2002.
- c. WRAMC Regulation 40-4, Hospital Ethics Committee (HEC), 18 Apr 2002.
- d. WRAMC Regulation 40-3, Withholding and Withdrawing Life Sustaining Treatment (WLS), Including Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Orders, 19 Apr 2002.

**5. Responsibilities**

The department/service chiefs are responsible for ensuring continuity of care is maintained on all patients.

**6. Policies**

a. Walter Reed Army Medical Center supports the patient's right to participate in his/her medical treatment and will respect this decision and cooperate to the fullest extent possible.

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\*This regulation supersedes WRAMC Regulation 40-93, 1 SEP 1999

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b. Situations may arise in which the prescribed care for a patient conflicts with the personal ethics, moral values or religious beliefs of a health care professional and (s)he may wish to transfer total care of or an aspect of that care to another health care professional or to another health care facility. In no instance will patient care be jeopardized during this transfer.

### **7. Procedures**

a. If personnel anticipate this conflict in advance, they should notify their supervisor, who should take reasonable steps to avoid placing the personnel in a potentially conflicting situation.

b. If this conflict arises, the health care professional should attempt to transfer care to another, equivalent professional as soon as the conflict is identified. Throughout the transfer process, the patient must receive appropriate care.

c. If no willing alternate healthcare professional can be identified, the requesting health care professional shall submit a request for withdrawal from care to his/her direct supervisor or department head. The request should describe the firmly held beliefs of the health care professional and how the proposed care conflicts with these beliefs. This request will be reviewed by the direct supervisor and referred to the Deputy Commander for Clinical Services (DCCS) for a decision.

d. The requesting health care professional must continue to provide appropriate care or treatment of the patient until the written request for withdrawal has been approved and adequate, alternate arrangements have been made. Abandonment or refusal to provide care without alternate arrangements will result in disciplinary action.

e. The requesting health care professional, the supervisor or the DCCS may refer the request to the WRAMC Hospital Ethics Committee. The Committee is available to help resolve issues arising from these conflicts and may make recommendations to the DCCS or Hospital Commander.

**The proponent agency of this publication is the Walter Reed Army Medical Center Ethics Committee. Users are invited to send suggestions and comments on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) to Commander, WRAMC, ATTN: MCHL-SCC, 6900 Georgia Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20307-5001**

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

JAMES R. GREENWOOD  
COL, MS  
Deputy Commander for  
Administration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ERIK J. GLOVER', is written over the printed name.

ERIK J. GLOVER  
MAJ, MS  
Executive Officer

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